

Missouri Assessment Program Spring 2005

Communication Arts

Released Items

Grade 7

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Directions

This article by Jennifer Owings Dewey is about her visit to an ancient rock-art site. Read the article. Then answer Numbers 11 through 15.



Yellow Man by Moonlight

By Jennifer Owings Dewey

“Yellow Man?” The park ranger removed his glasses as he asked this question. “You want to see Yellow Man?”

“Yes,” I said. “I do. Here is a letter from my publisher to explain why.”

I was in the visitors’ center in Canyonlands National Park, southern Utah. To see a certain rock-art site called Yellow Man, I needed the ranger’s permission. The letter I gave him explained that I was working on a book for children about rock art, those paintings and etchings on stone done by the Anasazi, an ancient people of North America.

“Yellow Man is off-limits,” the ranger said. “We’ve closed the area because of vandalism.”

“I wonder if you might make an exception for me?” I asked as politely as I could. “I promise not to harm anything.”

The ranger avoided my eyes for a moment. Then he turned to me, handed back the letter, and said, “OK, you don’t look like a vandal to me. I’ll draw you a map. Follow it closely because there are few trails out there.”

“Thank you so much,” I said, shaking his hand.

As I left the visitors’ center, the ranger asked if I knew my way around in the wilderness. “Yes,” I said. “I’ve done this sort of thing before.”

I slept on the ground near the visitors’ center that night, warm inside my sleeping bag. Before sunrise, I packed enough provisions to get me to Yellow Man by midday and back to the truck by nightfall.

By dawn I was on my way into the heart of Canyonlands, a maze of red rock country, a

landscape cut by ravines and canyons the colors of deerskin and sunsets. The trees that grow in the park are stunted by the dryness. In some places, what grows appears to spring straight from the rocks.

As I hiked along, taking a trail that would go nine miles into the interior of the park, I thought of the ancient people who had once lived there. One of them, perhaps with the help of a friend, had painted the image I was off to see, Yellow Man. It would be exciting to see a picture that was painted on a rock at least a thousand years ago.

At some point in my trek, I took a wrong turn. By the time I realized my mistake, the afternoon sun was in my eyes. It worried me because I had not brought overnight equipment with me. The error I made in reading the map would cost me.

I retraced my steps, read and reread the map. Finally, at four in the afternoon, I stood before



the image of Yellow Man. He took my breath away.

I judged Yellow Man to be about twenty-four inches high. The figure had been painted with pure yellow pigment, probably with animal or human hair tied in a tight bundle. The yellow could have come from crushed yellow flowers mixed with blood or the whites of wild bird eggs.

Yellow Man's arms and legs are dancing. His face is round, the mouth smiles, and his ears stick out from the sides of his head.

Yellow Man is painted on a natural wall of red sandstone. Above, the wall sticks out to form an overhang that protects him from rain and sun.

Near him on the wall are smaller drawings of mountain sheep, antelope, and a single bird with outspread wings. I wondered if the same artist had done all the drawings, or if several had worked at different times.

It was after five the next time I checked my watch, too late to walk nine miles back to the visitors' center. I had little with me to make camp, but I felt it unsafe to risk becoming lost in the dark.

When I explored, I found the ruins of a small settlement, dwellings once occupied by people living in Yellow Man's time. The stone block remains of rooms were crumbling and roofless. For me, one of them would be shelter for the night.

I dumped the contents of my pack on the ground to see what I had managed to bring along. There was a quart of water in a plastic bottle, cookies, crackers and cheese, a sweater, a windbreaker, and an extra pair of socks. I had paper to write or draw on (or to make a fire

with) and matches. I always carry matches.

I decided against fire. As night fell, the warm glow of a nearly full moon gave me the light I needed. I would sleep in the ruins, curled against a wall older than I could imagine.

I slept soundly for many hours. Dream images filled my head. I dreamed of feet moving on the ground, rodent feet, or perhaps the feet of people dancing.

I woke up afraid in the night, not knowing where I was. I got up and ran to the base of Yellow Man's wall. There he was, lively and bright in the moonlight. "Hello," I said.

Yellow Man did not answer.

"I'm scared," I said out loud. "I'm not used to staying out like this, alone."

I knew the image would not talk to me. But it made me feel better just to look at him, to realize how long he had been dancing on a stone wall.

I sat in the sand for a while, until I felt calm again. Then I returned to my tiny stone room and slept until dawn. A buzzing sound woke me—a hummingbird with an iridescent green throat. The bird swirled in the air over my head as if to say, "You've slept long enough, it's time to get up." I took the bird's wake-up call as a good omen.

After waving good-bye to Yellow Man, I returned to the visitors' center. The ranger was there.

"How did it go?" he asked. "Worth the trouble?"

"Yes," I told him. "Well worth it."

When I left the park, I silently offered thanks to the ranger for allowing me the opportunity to get lost and spend a moonlit night in Yellow Man's country.



Go On ►

11

How does the title “Yellow Man by Moonlight” foreshadow the action that follows in the article? Use details and/or examples from the article to support your answer.

13

How do the descriptions of Canyonlands National Park and Yellow Man contribute to the mysterious feeling of the article? Use details and/or examples from the article to support your answer.

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WRITING

Directions

Now you will write a paper in response to a writing prompt. First, read the prompt in the box below.

Then use the separate paper your teacher has given you for your prewriting activity (such as brainstorming, listing, freewriting, clustering, mapping, or drawing).

After you finish your prewriting activity, write your first draft on the separate paper your teacher has given you. Look back at your prewriting activity for ideas.

Writing Prompt

The passages you read involve individuals with strong character traits. In life, people need strong character traits to face many challenges. Write a paper to a classmate that explains the character traits needed to meet challenges.

Go On ►

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Directions

Now you have time to revise your draft. Reread your draft and think about the Writer's Checklist below. Check every box that makes a true statement about your draft.

Writer's Checklist



- ☐ My paper has a beginning, middle, and end.
- ☐ My paper uses paragraphing appropriately.
- ☐ My paper flows smoothly from one idea to another.
- ☐ My paper stays on the topic.
- ☐ My paper includes details and examples.
- ☐ My paper uses precise and vivid language.
- ☐ My paper includes a variety of sentence structures.
- ☐ My paper includes correct grammar/usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

For every box you did not check, make the necessary revisions on your draft before you write your final copy on Pages 5 through 9.



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Session 2 | Page 5

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